

Many teens afraid to intervene in sexual assault, survey finds

March 13 2013



National effort launched to raise awareness, encourage involvement.

(HealthDay)—More than half of all teens and young adults in the United States know a victim of dating violence or sexual assault, according to a new national survey.

But 53 percent would find it difficult to intervene, and 40 percent wouldn't even know what to do if they witnessed such a crime, the poll found.

The survey "uncovers the grim reality of [dating violence](#) and [sexual assault](#) among 15 to 22 year olds, and the fact that so many are uncertain about the [warning signs](#) and do not know what to do to stop violence and assault," the organizers of a national effort to combat dating violence and

sexual aggression said in a news release.

Called NO MORE, this undertaking "is designed to end the stigma and shame of [domestic violence](#) and sexual assault, drive new awareness and activate involvement," the organizers explained in the news release.

The March 13 launch of NO MORE coincides with the start Wednesday of a highly publicized rape trial in Steubenville, Ohio. Two [high school football](#) players are accused of raping a 16-year-old girl while other boys allegedly watched.

The survey of teens' and [young adults](#)' attitudes, funded by the Avon Foundation for Women, was conducted by GfK Public Affairs and [Corporate Communications](#). Some highlights follow:

- 36 percent of young men interviewed knew a victim of dating violence, and 25 percent knew a victim of sexual assault.
- One in six young women said they were the victim of sexual assault, compared to one in 50 young men.
- Asked about dating violence, 9 percent said they had hit their significant other. Young women were three times more likely to have done so than young men. However, the vast majority of young people said they would not be capable of this type of behavior.
- 37 percent of [Hispanics](#) perceived dating violence as a problem among their friends.
- 88 percent of blacks polled viewed dating violence as a societal problem.
- Black young people have more discussions with their friends and parents about dating abuse and sexual violence than whites.
- 62 percent of young men and women said they would be willing to help if they witnessed dating violence or a sexual assault, but

only 46 percent of males thought they would recognize such a crime.

- One in three young women said they didn't know the signs of sexual assault.
- One in three young people admitted fear of getting hurt physically could prevent them from intervening.

The organizers of NO MORE believe teaching young people about different forms of abuse and how to combat it can help prevent tragedies like the one in Ohio.

Many teens were unaware that dating abuse, for example, includes controlling behaviors, name-calling and stalking.

"Once abusive behaviors are more clearly defined and young men are educated to recognize abuse, it is likely they will intervene more often and more successfully," according to the study authors.

Major violence-prevention agencies and other organizations are uniting behind NO MORE. Like the pink breast cancer ribbon or the red AIDS ribbon, the NO MORE symbol is intended to boost awareness of the issue.

More information: For more information on the new national effort, visit NOMORE.org.

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